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which impede the navigation of the Cuyuni will, I fear, prove a great obstacle in the way of rendering the fertility of its banks available. The Amacura, Barima, and Waini are for a great distance free from such impediments; and a denser population only is wanted to render this part of Guiana one of the most productive throughout its whole extent; and to this end the numerous natural canals and connexions between its chief rivers would materially contribute.

These tracts are at present inhabited by the following tribes:—  
1. Warrans, along the coast, from Pomeroon to the Amacura; 2. Arawaaks, intermixed with the former, chiefly at the rivers Waini, Barima, and Amacura; 3. Waikas and Chaymas, sister tribes of the Wacawais, at the upper course of these rivers, and the regions between the Barama and Cuyuni. I estimate the whole number of these nations at 2500. Many of them assist in felling timber or in working on the estates; and if the system which only of late years has been followed, namely, that of treating the Indian as a rational being, in giving him a fair remuneration for his work, shall be generally adopted, the aborigines, there is no doubt, will prove most useful labourers to the colony. It is my full persuasion that if the attention and paternal provisions which the aborigines of Guiana have of late years enjoyed at the hands of Her Majesty's Government be continued, and means adopted to afford them religious instruction, a relic of the once numerous Indian population may yet be rescued.

V.—*Cape Palmas and the Mena, or Kroomen*. Communicated  
by Dr. FRANCIS BACON.

THE region around Cape Palmas, comprising parts of the Grain and Ivory Coasts of West Africa—extending, along the coast, from Little Kroo (about 100 miles N.W. of Cape Palmas) to Tahou (about 100 miles E. of Cape Palmas), and averaging probably 100 miles in breadth towards the interior—is, not only in climate, soil, and productions, but in geological, and geographical, and ethnographical characteristics, *one country*. Its general position is remarkable and interesting, occupying as it does the grand salient angle of the western shore of the continent, which here changes its general direction from N. and S. to E. and W.; Cape Palmas itself being the actual turning point, as it is the centre of that sector of a circle which very nearly encloses the region under consideration. This point is also the *centre* of the subject in another sense; for, residing there at different periods in the course

of more than two years (about nine months in all), it was there I began my researches, and thence I gradually extended them in every direction until they embraced, directly or indirectly, most of the country, the description of which is here attempted.

The whole country, though by no means level, presents nothing that can be called a mountain to the eye of a voyager along the coast; though, in the haze of the dry season, the little hills of Cape Palmas (perhaps from 50 to 200 feet high) often "*loom up*" in the view from the sea, so as to half-justify the otherwise unaccountable fictions of some transient observers, who have assured their readers of the existence of mountains there which Golbery and others have rather hastily pronounced to be the westernmost termination of the "*Mountains of the Moon*."

In the short excursions made by me towards the interior from Cape Palmas, the land, like all other lands, gradually became more elevated; yet, for 50 miles, the highest eminences are only hills of moderate elevation: but, from the low tops of these, looking N. and N.E., I could perceive, over a more broken country, high blue peaks and ridges towering in the horizon, which seemed well entitled to the name of mountains. I know them to be such from the testimony of those who have actually ascended them, and passed over them to others beyond, still loftier; from which again the view towards the interior presents a constantly ascending series of mountainous elevations. With these observations, testimonies of the routes from other points of this coast towards the interior uniformly coincide; so that I am warranted in making the general positive statement that this whole region lies upon the southerly and south-westerly slope of an interior mass or group of mountains, whose ranges probably conform to the angular direction of the sea-coast in this part, or perhaps rather are themselves the basis and skeleton which gave the coast this outline. The position of this group, it may be remarked, is not remote from that announced, by Park and other travellers in Senegambia, as extending far to the southward of that region, under the name of the "*Mountains of Kong*."

This simple view of the orography of the country further illustrates the next important physical feature—the course of the rivers. These are all short and insignificant, rising within the limits mentioned, and, as far as known, running a nearly straight course—the general direction being at right angles to the coast until within a few miles, or a single mile, of the sea, when they all make an abrupt turn and run for some distance parallel with the coast, or nearly so, and then, spreading into a wide basin and dividing into a labyrinth of mangrove-creeks, they pour their waters into the sea through narrow embouchures, in which the surf is dreadful beyond description, and in most of them always

totally impassable. Not one of these rivers is navigable: the largest of them might admit the passage of a ship's long-boat for 20 or 30 miles, if the bars at their mouths were safely crossed; but most of them are so shallow, or so obstructed by rocks, that hardly anything but the light canoes of the natives could find sufficient depth of water. The number of streams discharging their waters into the sea on this tract of coast is about 12, which need not be here enumerated, as the charts of the new surveys of the coast by H. B. M. ship *Ætna* will give all such details. The largest of them is the Cavally, which enters the sea about 18 miles E. of Cape Palmas: a brief description of this may serve, in its general characteristics, for all. It rises about 80 or 100 miles from the sea, in the mountains of the interior group before alluded to: its general course is very nearly S., though the course of its primary branch is nearly S.W. till, augmented by some westerly streams, it turns more southerly, through a narrow valley between two low ridges, which are (as far as I have ascertained) trap, or syenite, and red sandstone, the latter much vesiculated on its surface and in its places of contact with the former. At the distance of about 60 miles from its mouth occurs a transverse ridge or bed of rocks, over which it pours in a slight cataract, known by the name of the "Falls of the Cavally." Thence it continues, with several bends, alternately south-easterly and south-westerly, through a very populous and fertile region, to a point not more than 3 miles from the sea, whence it turns about, E. by S. or E.S.E., and runs nearly parallel to the coast for nearly 6 miles, leaving between it and the ocean a somewhat triangular tract of level or slightly undulating sandy alluvial. It then sends off numerous lateral branches, which reunite and form alluvial muddy islands, densely covered with mangroves, that line the banks with an impenetrable dark fence, cutting off all view of the land by the density not only of their foliage, but of their interweaving trunks, projecting roots, and rooting branches—characteristics of this singular tree too well known to need further description, but noticeable as giving one uniform sombre air to all the river scenery of the coast of intertropical Africa. The whole mass of its waters finally widens into a large basin, about a mile broad, from which it breaks furiously into the ocean through a shifting passage in the sandy beach not more than 100 yards wide. On the bar, where the torrent meets the tremendous waves of the roughest of all seas in the world, the "*rollers*" rise and sharpen into high breakers, which are for ever roaring and foaming across the channel in a continuous line, constituting a barrier of surf which has never yet been passed. This is the general character of all the river-mouths of this region, and, in fact, of the whole coast from Cape St. Ann to Cape Formoso; yet rather less than

one half of them may be passed at favourable times by the exercise of great prudence and energy, waiting for an interval of comparatively moderate surf, and then hurrying through the dangerous pass with all possible speed, before the closely pursuing succession of heavy swells overtake and overwhelm the unfortunate boat, to the almost certain destruction of all in her. In spite of all these precautions, however, and the remarkable skill and energy of the native boatmen, fatal accidents of this kind are of frequent occurrence.

The outline of the sea-shore is very irregular, the sandy beach being at intervals of about 5 or 6 miles broken by sharp rocky points, prolonged occasionally into long reefs, partially visible above water, which constitute the most formidable among the peculiar perils which the navigator encounters along this fatal coast. Notwithstanding this general conformation of points and bights, there is not one bay or harbour, or even roadstead, offering the least shelter to vessels. This remark may also be extended to the whole coast of Western Guinea, from Cape St. Ann to Cape Formoso. Vessels always anchor in the open sea, at from 1 to 5 miles distance from land, after carefully ascertaining the quality of the bottom by repeated soundings, generally in from 5 to 25 fathoms. The surf on the beach is everywhere formidable, like that on the river-bars, but the danger to life is comparatively trifling, for though a "*capsize*" is an every-day occurrence, it is seldom difficult to scramble out upon the beach with no worse injury than a complete immersion in sea-water of the comfortable warmth of 86° Fahrenheit. The landing is almost always effected in the light and ingeniously constructed canoes of the natives, as there are few places where a boat would not be stove by the surf. Gales of wind are almost unknown on this coast, though short furious tornadoes are frequent throughout the year, most common, however, in the spring and autumn.

The rocks of this region are of but two species, as far as I have seen them. 1. A light-red sandstone, apparently the general stratified foundation of the whole soil, and, in many places, evidently the material of which the loose soil is composed: it is a small-grained conglomerate, mostly of quartz fragments—coloured, of course, by the sesquioxyl of iron. On the low ridges which vary the surface of the country we find it apparently much thrown out of place, broken, and altered in its mechanical characteristics by proximity to another formation which here intrudes. 2. A diabase, varying in different localities in the degree to which its two components are blended or separated—in some places being a coarse syenite, with large distinct masses of hornblende and feldspar; in others a fine syenite, the dark surface being minutely speckled with the white feldspar; in others, approaching to trap

or greenstone in the intimate union of its parts with the bluish-black hue, rusted brownish yellow on the long-exposed surfaces; and in others, losing in a great degree the feldspar, it presents a nearly pure hornblende schist. In most places it inclines to a distinctly schistous structure, whatever may be its mineralogical character; and it is also, with general uniformity, traversed by veins or beds of white quartz, varying from an inch to a foot in thickness. The direction of the schist is nearly due E. and W., with great uniformity. The great strata, or rather laminæ, are for the most part nearly at right angles to the horizon; but there is, I think, generally a slight dip towards the south. This rock forms the points, reefs, and islets of the whole coast. In the Kroo country (the north-western portion of the region under consideration) it is of the first-named variety, and even in spots granitoid in character, having occasional specks of black mica and patches of white and reddish quartz. As we proceed down the coast it becomes more like greenstone in its characters. At Grand Sesters and Garraway it is the hornblende syenite; at Fish Town and Cape Palmas it is almost greenstone; and at the latter place there is much of the hornblende slate, in which iron pyrites frequently occurs. Eastward of Cape Palmas it continues of this general character. Towards the interior the diabase more rarely appears: instead of the rough and sharp masses of black rock which project in little precipices along the points of the coast, we there find even the loftier eminences more rounded in their outline, richly wooded or cultivated to the very top, and seldom showing the rock on the surface. This, however, occasionally displays itself in the deeply-worn paths of the steeper ascents, and in the course of the mountain-torrents, which in the rains make slight sections of the soil and lay bare the red sandstone. The appearance of these elevations suggests the idea that the force which raised the apparently igneous rocks, and thrust them through the broken strata of the sandstone on the coast—in dikes, peaks, ridges, and the usual forms of trap intrusions—had in the interior met greater resistance in the superficial strata, and consequently only bent and raised them into higher elevations, without piercing and surmounting them, in most instances. I never discovered any organic remains, or gypsum, or saline formations, or coal deposits, or any calcareous substances, in this red sandstone; nor, indeed, anywhere on the whole coast of Senegambia and Guinea from the Senegal to the Gold Coast. No gold occurs, or is suspected to exist, in that region which I am now describing, unless the iron pyrites of Cape Palmas be auriferous.

The soil of the whole country is sandy and dry, and would be unproductive but for the peculiar character of the climate, and of the agriculture of the very industrious native inhabitants. In

natural fertility it is vastly inferior to Senegambia and the region N. and N.W. of the Grain Coast. The climate, however, is so modified as to regulate the heat and moisture very happily to the exigencies of the soil. The rains are more equally diffused throughout the year than in the higher intertropical latitudes, beginning before the vernal equinox, and continuing long after the autumnal: what is called the "dry season," in fact, commonly includes less than three months in December, January, and February; and even then heavy showers are by no means uncommon—in some years rain occurring in every month: a state of things strikingly different from the seven, eight, and nine months absolute drought so constant and regular in Senegambia and the adjacent coast. One such season, apparently, would make the whole region around Cape Palmas almost a desert. The ground, thus well watered under a heat seldom less than 80° (Fahr.) even in the most sterile portions, constantly sends up a thick growth of shrubs; and, if neglected for a long course of years, becomes covered with immense trees, the loftiest in the world—in comparison with which the "tall ancestral trees" and "patrician oaks" of old England seem but "plebeian underwood." The largest and loftiest is the cotton-tree—either *Bombax ceiba*, or a closely allied congener. The mighty *Adansonia digitata*, the monarch of the vegetable kingdom, seems peculiar to Senegambia and its vicinity; at least I could never discover or hear of it farther S. than Cape Shilling, the southernmost point of the peninsula of Sierra Leone. The *Bombax*, however, though much less in circumference than this kindred genus, is commonly more than twice its height—often attaining an altitude (if I may be allowed a bold *guess*) of 200 feet; and all along the low coast constituting, with few exceptions, the only landmarks to direct the distant voyager—their huge tops appearing, many miles out at sea, like sails on the horizon; while the land, whose proximity would not otherwise be suspected, is totally invisible. In the little patches of forest which exist, other very large and lofty trees occur, of much harder and more durable wood than the *Bombaceæ*, equal in weight and firmness to teak, and almost to mahogany. Some of these are too hard and heavy for the natives to fell and work; but all that are manageable are of great value to these industrious people for the construction of large canoes, some of which, dug out of a single trunk, will carry more bulk than a common ship's long-boat, and can take in two large puncheons side by side.

But few and small tracts of such forest, however, are permitted to exist. Fully nine-tenths of the practicable soil are under alternate cultivation. The poverty of the soil is such as to require the mode which the natives universally adopt for obtaining a crop from it. The fields which are cultivated this year are suffered

to lie totally uncultivated for three years following : others are cleared and tilled to supply their place, changing the ground from year to year. By the fourth year the fallow is covered with a thick growth of bushes and small trees, which are then cut down, and the lighter branches burned on the spot, their ashes forming, with the decayed vegetable matter which has accumulated in three years, a thin soil sufficiently rich to furnish, by careful cultivation, with the aid of the abundant heat and moisture, a sufficient crop of rice or cassada, which are the two principal and almost sole products. The time of clearing and planting is from the 1st of January to the 1st of April. The rice-harvest commonly begins in August, and ends in October. The peculiarity of the seasons here, furnishing an abundance of moisture throughout the greater part of the year, gives this country very eminent advantages for the production of rice; which, as is well known, in almost every other part of the world—as in Carolina, India, China, &c.—is confined to low grounds, liable to regular inundation. This is also the case with the northern part of the rice-growing region of W. Africa, from the Gambia to Sierra Leone, or Sherbro, where the culture of this great staple is never attempted, except in the low grounds, and mostly along the banks of streams. But, on the Grain and Ivory Coasts, the long and abundant rains furnish a bountiful supply of water to the whole surface, high and low; so that the traveller meets with luxuriant rice-plantations on the sandy plains, and even on the sides and summits of the highest hills. The rice-growing region ends, on the coast, about St. Andrew's Bay, near the eastern limit of the Ivory Coast. Along the Gold Coast the culture of rice is hardly attempted, from the comparative dryness of the climate; for though the *period* of the rainy season is about the same as that of the western region in the same latitude, yet the showers are light and short, generally coming in furious squalls from the S.E. This peculiarity of climate, however, has its own advantages, like that of the W. coast, for the Indian corn or maize, which can hardly be ripened in a wet climate, is found to flourish and produce richly on that dry hot soil, and has become an important export from Africa, even to America, which hitherto has been supposed unrivalled in its capability of producing this its *indigenous* grain. This important addition to its produce the Gold Coast owes to the influence of British colonial government. It was first introduced, about 20 years since, by a British governor, whose name I cannot at this moment recall. On the windward coast it is occasionally raised in a small way, but is plucked while green, as the wet weather would seldom permit it to ripen. How it would succeed in the drier regions of Senegambia, I know not; for there again the soil (N. of the Gambia), incapable of producing rice, rejoices in



its own peculiar grain, the Guinea corn (a *Holcus*, I think), which excludes all the other *Cerealia*, from the Gambia to Mount Atlas. The Jaloffs and the Moors prefer it to rice and all other grain. These circumstances make the Cape Palmas region, notwithstanding its naturally poor soil, the granary of W. Africa. It is customary for British vessels, bound to the Bight of Biafra for palm-oil, to stop at some place on this part of the coast to supply themselves with kroomen (native boatmen), and rice for their support during the voyage, as none can be obtained to the leeward. The slave-traders, also, on the whole coast from the Rio Grande to the equator, have drawn their principal supplies for the sustenance of their live cargoes from this same region.

But in a commercial point of view, the most important article yielded by the country is derived not from agriculture, but from the fruit of a spontaneous production of the soil. This is the *Elais Guineënsis*,\* from the covering of whose seed or nut is extracted the palm-oil, so well known and important in English commerce and manufactures, some hundred thousand tons being annually imported into Liverpool, London, and Bristol from West Africa—the great majority, however, into the first-mentioned city. The Grain and Ivory coasts, indeed, compared with the Gold-coast and the Bights of Benin and Biafra, are but poor in palm-oil, yet they furnish enough to bring about half-a-dozen regularly trading English vessels to this region every year, besides the same number of Americans, and nearly as many Frenchmen, and in addition numerous occasional traders.

The palm-oil-tree is indigenous and abundant from the Gambia to the Congo; but the oil is manufactured in large quantities only in about two-thirds of this extent of country—the Rio Nunez being the most northern place whence it is exported (though in very trifling quantities), and the Bight of Pannavia being the southern limit of its production. Africa does not present the botanist with many species of the splendid tropical order *Palmæ*. On the western coast I have never seen but four which are indigenous; and of these, one, the *Phoenix dactylifera*, is confined to the neighbourhood of the Senegal—being properly a plant of the northern half of the continent, or rather of that peculiar region of deserts, mountains, and oases that stretches from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf, with the same general characters. It is the land of the date and the gum, of the camel and the ostrich, of the Berber and the Arab, of the Caucasian race and *not* of the negro. This region, except in the bare circumstance of juxta-position or continental unity, has no more affinity or connexion with Negro-Africa in climate, soil, products, inhabitants,

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\* Smith and R. Brown, Congo Exped.

diseases, or history than it has with India, Oceania, or South America. In the neighbourhood of the Senegal, which is on the line of these grand divisions, the date-tree is perhaps not strictly indigenous, as it does not appear widely diffused over the country, but is mostly confined to the towns and the vicinity of houses, where it thrives, and is much valued. The Arabs may have brought it thither from the desert. Along the sandy plains and rocky points of the sea-shore, on the Grain and Ivory coast, there is indeed a dwarf date, the *Phoenix spinosa* of Thonning and Von Martius. Its distinguishing characteristics are its minuteness, and its total want of trunk or stem—the leaves being all radical, springing from the ground and gracefully arching over backwards, so as to touch it again with their other extremity. The leaflets, like those of the *P. dactylifera*, are stiff and sharp as daggers, so that wherever this plant invades a tract of land it soon becomes impenetrable to man and beast. Not even the sturdy bullocks can pass through it to graze, its sharp points easily penetrating their tough hides, though it never rises more than 3 feet from the ground. Its fruit, not bigger than a large currant, is also a perfect date in miniature. It is often eaten; but the bulbs, or rather underground parts of the leaf-stalks, are most valued, as when boiled they furnish a very palatable dish, of the consistency of cabbage, of a very rich and nutritious taste; and thence the plant is commonly known at Cape Palmas as the “palm-cabbage.” Von Martius confines it to the Cape Verde islands and the coast from Cape Verde to Sierra Leone. My observations extend its *habitat* to the E. termination of the Ivory-coast. The only other indigenous palm on this part of the coast is the *Borassus Æthiopum* of Von Martius, which I believe is nearly co-extensive with the *Elaïs*. It is a stately and beautiful tree, sometimes occupying long tracts upon the sea-shore for miles together, not densely like a wood or grove, but with interspaces of 2 or 3 rods, quite clear of underwood, and often covered with a smooth green sod, mounded at regular intervals by the indefatigable *termites*, whose works here almost equal those of man. This is the character of the vegetation of a tract of coast from 12 to 6 miles northerly of Cape Palmas; and this immense group of tall *Borassi*, being, in the view far out at sea in a vessel coming from the N.W., blended with the obscure outline of the low rocky point 7 miles beyond it (which is the veritable cape, though it shows no palm-trees, and probably never did), suggests the true occasion of the name applied by the Portuguese discoverers—*Cabo das Palmas*—“the Cape of the Palm-trees.”

The *Cocos nucifera* makes its appearance at several places on the coast which have had much foreign commerce; and on the Gold-coast almost every town is shaded by a large grove of them;

yet it has evidently been introduced by Europeans either from the East or West Indies—more probably the latter.

The country, thus hastily described, is very densely inhabited by a peculiar, energetic, enterprising, and interesting people, the *Mena* race, generally known on the coast under the names of Kroomen and Fishmen. As temporary emigrants or rather *journeymen* labourers, the young men are found at every trading-place on the coast from the Gambia to the equator, or beyond, and on board of every vessel, whether merchant or man-of-war. At home or abroad, they are characterised by great industry, patience, intelligence, fidelity, and obedience. The short account of the Kroomen in Messrs. Laird and Oldfield's journal of their voyage to the Niger, contains, as might be expected from their transient opportunity of observation, many errors. About one half is, however, quite true; but the other half is so incorrect as to give a very unjust idea of the character and situation of these remarkable people. For instance, no man that has ever lived among them in their own country could tolerate the statement that a Krooman or Fishman having acquired money abroad lives in idleness at home supported by the labour of his wives. They continue, with hardly the exception of the highest chiefs, a most laborious race until about the age of forty-five or fifty. The women are restricted to particular kinds of labour, household affairs, planting and gathering rice. But the cutting and clearing of the bush, the building and repairing of houses and canoes, the manufacture of utensils, &c., fishing, and a long list of laborious employments keep the men as active and industrious as the women. A more universally industrious people I do not know in the world, civilized or uncivilized. The political constitution of the Mena is very purely republican, the sovereignty of the different communities being generally exercised by four elective chiefs of different functions, constantly checked and liable to removal by the popular will. Their religion is practically a mere *fetichism*, with some obscure traces of a speculative belief in one great sole Deity, and a few other partially correct notions of natural religion. Their language is throughout the whole country fundamentally the same; but they are divided into about twenty tribes speaking as many different dialects, about as unlike each other as are the different provincial forms of the Spanish or the German—individuals of the more widely-separated tribes being only able to understand each other on the commonest subjects, while bordering tribes can converse with each other with nearly as great facility as the inhabitants of neighbouring counties in England. In language, as in manners, usages, character, and physical appearance, this whole race is very widely different from all other African nations, far and

near, scarcely any affinities being traceable between them and the Búsús, who border them on the windward side, nor with the Búgerè on the leeward—and not the least with the mysterious Bá-ú-rě, who occupy the vast unexplored interior behind all these coast-tribes.

The Grebo language, which is the dialect of the tribe of the Mena residing in the immediate vicinity, is spoken by about 24,000 persons, inhabiting from about 10 miles N.W. of Cape Palmas to the Cavally river on the E., occupying a territory of about 100 square miles. Being thus situated nearly at the centre of the Mena region, their language is about midway in character between the dialects of the E., W., and N. extremities of the whole region, and is therefore very happily adapted to become the standard written language of the race. A number of little books in this tongue have been printed at Cape Palmas. They are the work of the Rev. John Leighton Wilson of South Carolina, missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. He first established himself at Cape Palmas December 25th, 1834. In the course of five years, among many arduous duties, and, for the first two years, suffering much from the diseases of the climate, he grammatized the language, so as to make it a perfect vehicle of religious truth to the people, numbers of whom are now fast learning to read and write their own language in the schools of the mission. Thirty or forty were in 1839 fluent scholars, so as to find much pleasure in reading each little book as it appears from the press; and a few already acting as teachers of schools, one of which is planted at Sórraké, in the Guábo tribe (behind the Grebo), about 30 miles N. of Cape Palmas.

I must ask indulgence for the deficiencies and incompleteness of this sketch, trusting that it may interest by the facts it contains, relative to a dangerous and unexplored region, which deserves the scientific labours of men better qualified and provided for observation and exploration than I was. I have written by snatches in the brief intervals of a hurried visit to England; and this circumstance, together with the confused feeling consequent upon a return to the bustle of civilized life, after three years of semi-barbarism, are unfavourable to the satisfactory execution of what I have attempted.

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